

Bourbonnais resident and Vietnam veteran, Roger Bean feels that his time in the United States Navy has finally come full circle, thanks to Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson (IL-11). Due to the work of the Congresswoman and Constituent Services Director, Chasity Wells-Armstrong, Bean was recently presented with long-overdue medals from his service in Vietnam, along with a special acknowledgement for dedication to his country from Rep. Halvorson.

"Mr. Bean showed great courage by enlisting in the Navy at the age of 18, knowing that he would serve in the Vietnam War," said Halvorson. "This was a difficult time and a difficult war for the United States - and he should be honored in every way possible for his bravery. I'm so pleased to present Mr. Bean with these long-awaited medals and wholeheartedly applaud him for his service and commitment to the United States of America."

Born in Chicago, Bean says he credits his father, Leigh Bean, for instilling "strong family values and a sense of patriotism" in him and his brother, Kenneth. After graduating from Fenger High School, Bean carried out his dream of enlisting in the Navy after his 18th birthday. He says that after witnessing his brother's military service in the Korean War, his vision of service to his country was reaffirmed.

"I felt I had an obligation to my country for letting me have the freedoms I enjoy," said Bean. "As a child of the Cold War, I witnessed how other countries did not afford the freedoms that the United States provides. It was an honor and a pleasure to serve. Upon taking the test, I felt the decision to enlist was the right one because it was the right time to serve. Even knowing the outcome, I would not change anything."

Serving in the Navy from 1964 to 1968, Bean completed training at Great Lakes Naval Base and was stationed aboard the USS Turner Joy. He served 3 tours of duty in Vietnam and found himself thrust in combat when he was assigned a mission to silence coastal batteries that had taken US Navy Seal delivery craft under fire. Bean managed to successfully complete the mission; however, he sustained injuries that resulted from the impact of being under hostile fire.

After leaving military service, Roger has worked in several management positions, including an insurance investigator. He has maintained his connection to the Veterans Community, serving in several leadership positions including 23 years as a Veterans Service Officer through the Vietnam Veterans of America and Disabled American Veterans Organizations. Currently, he is the First Junior Vice-Commander of the Disabled American Veterans organization and the state liaison at Manteno Veterans Home. He also has served in the Vietnam Veterans of America and the VFW. He also served as the First Superintendent of the Veterans Assistance Commission in Kankakee County.

Medals he's garnered and presented by Halvorson for his service include the: Navy Good Conduct Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Vietnam Service Medal (w/1 silver and 1 bronze star); Meritorious Unit Commendation Ribbon; Combat Action Ribbon and the Vietnam, Campaign Medal.

Also present at the medal ceremony with Halvorson was his wife of 31 years, Gerri. Together they have 5 children, 19 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

"When the Congresswoman and I first started talking about this, we were acquainted and I felt comfortable with that, but her staff did not know me. But Nick and Chasity assured me that they were going to be as responsive to me as the Congresswoman. They shared the Congresswoman's interest in helping veterans. That became abundantly clear," said Bean.

"This would not have been possible without the combined efforts of the Congresswoman, Chasity, and Nick. It is a compliment to the Congresswoman to have the competent staff she has behind her. I would encourage any veterans, veterans' spouses, and/or dependents to enlist the help of the Congresswoman and her staff. Because of the way I was treated, I can assure that veterans and their families will be helped."